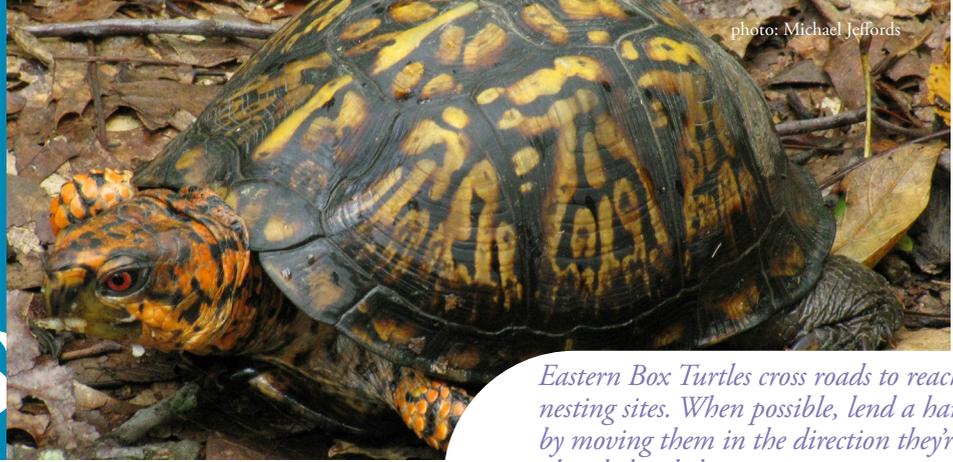


june/july
2015

friends



Eastern Box Turtles cross roads to reach nesting sites. When possible, lend a hand by moving them in the direction they're already headed.

of the cache river watershed



The Cache River Autotour

Hot off
the press,
the new
Cache River

Autotour map and brochure made its debut at Nature Fest 2015. Designed and produced by Friends of the Cache River Watershed, the brochure features 12 suggested stops that represent some of the best the Cache has to offer. Detailed site descriptions include a wealth of information about the unique plants, animals, insects, landscape features and seasonal sights and sounds to be experienced at each stop. Suggested itineraries are provided, based on the level of activity desired.

One could spend a lifetime exploring the Cache's natural wonders – but, if you only have a weekend, or even a few hours, the Cache River Autotour is designed to showcase the area's highlights and whet your appetite for a return visit. Complimentary brochures are currently available at the Cache River Wetlands Center and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge Office.

For more information,
see www.friendsofthecache.org
e-mail friendsofthecacheriver@gmail.com
or like "Friends of the Cache River Watershed"
on FACEBOOK.



Nature Fest 2015

was a success, attracting approximately 900 attendees in spite of heavy rains. "Although this was not our highest attendance," said event coordinator Jodie Delaney, "Considering the weather, the turnout was wonderful."

Participants of all ages were captivated by exhibits and special programs on salamanders, monarchs, birds of prey, swamp rabbits, frogs, toads, turtles, bats, snakes and fish. Visitors canoed the Cache, experienced their first taste of fried Asian carp, cheered the statewide winners of the Junior Duck Stamp competition and conquered the "Cache Challenge." Thanks to the hard work of volunteers, natural resource staff, exhibitors and associated organizations, the event was more than a success—it was a memorable experience for many people.

Special thanks go to the staff at **Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge**, for their overall leadership and support, and to the **Americorps** crews from Cypress Creek and Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, who worked so hard before and during the event. Thanks also to the **Illinois Department of Natural Resources** for the use of its facility and staff support, and **Shawnee Community College** for its contribution of event resources.



photo: Jan Sundberg

Log On!

In May, Friends of the Cache unveiled an all-new website, with a new look and new URL. We invite you to log on and explore. You'll find information on things to see and do in the Cache—ranging from hiking and canoeing to herping and antler shed hunting—where to eat and stay while you're here, and a calendar of events and programs. Read

more about the history of the Cache, current research being conducted in the area and projects and opportunities sponsored by the Friends. Click **JOIN** to become a Friend or renew your membership quickly and conveniently, and register to participate in members-only online forums.

www.friendsofthecache.org

photo by Dave Shaffer



Back by popular demand, it's time for the Friends of the Cache 2nd Annual "Prettiest Box Turtle" Contest!

To enter, post your picture of a box turtle on the Friends of the Cache River Watershed FACEBOOK page. (Be sure to like the page while you're at it!) The photo with the most likes by September 25 will be declared the winner, and the lucky photographer will receive a Cache t-shirt and cap. Your box turtle photos don't have to be taken in the Cache, and you can enter as many as you like, although last year's entries are ineligible. Judging will be based on the beauty of the box turtle, not the artistic quality of the photo. Pictured is last year's winning entry by Cathy Wood Jennings.



Notes from My 3x5 Notebook

by Susan Post

"We immersed ourselves in the emergence, hiking toward the calling—louder, louder—the air was full of dark bodies flying. Near an oak tree you could hear the crescendo—loud then soft, loud, soft—better than any orchestra. We had the best seats in the 'house'—our legs—as we experienced this 13-year symphony."

*Lower Mississippi Valley Brood XXIII
Giant City State Park, June 2015
Journal of Susan Post*

They're back! No other insects in North America excite as much curiosity and wonder as periodical cicadas when they make their appearance every 13 or 17 years. Periodical cicadas occur in the eastern United States, but nowhere else on earth. The cicada currently making its voice heard in southern Illinois is part of the Lower Mississippi River Valley Brood, which has a 13-year life cycle. This prolonged time schedule

revolves around survival for the masses: when a large population of juicy insects suddenly appears, predators simply cannot eat them all, and a significant number will survive to reproduce.

Periodical cicada nymphs live deep in the soil of wooded areas, feeding on sap from tree roots. When the time comes to emerge, they dig their way out during late spring to molt into adults that live five to six weeks. The adults mate, and the female lays her eggs in slits of small twigs and shrubs, using her sickle-like ovipositor. The eggs hatch after six to seven weeks, and the nymphs fall to the ground and burrow until they find a suitable tree root. Here they'll feed and wait for their next emergence, in the late spring of 2028.



What's Next

Annual Moonlight Paddle on the Cache

*Thursday, July 2, 7:30-10pm
Lower Cache Access*

Join Mike Brown, Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge Manager, for this fascinating moonlight canoe tour of Buttonland Swamp. Listen for green tree frogs and whip-poor-wills as you glide by ancient cypress trees under the light of the full moon. **Only a few seats are left:** for reservations, call Cypress Creek at 618-634-2231.

The popular Moonlight Paddle is a members-only event for Friends of the Cache. To join or renew your membership, please use the mail-in form in this newsletter. Or, you can join quickly and conveniently online: visit www.friendsofthecache.org and click JOIN.



Kids to the Cache

Out of the classroom

and into a canoe is the best way to learn about the fascinating Cache River Wetlands! Warblers, frogs, ducks and cypress trees are all part of the **Swamp Ecology Tours** offered by Cypress Creek Refuge and Shawnee Community College. Over the last two months, a dozen area school groups that included more than 500 students have paddled the Cache. For more information on upcoming educational

programs or outings, call the Refuge office at 618-634-2231.

Cypress Creek is looking forward to another great summer working with **Youth Conservation Corps** members. YCC is a summer employment program for young men and women who enjoy working outside and have an interest in natural resource careers: for more information, visit www.youthconservationcorps.org. Four students who represent four local schools will begin work at the Refuge on June 8.

“A trip to the Cache River Watershed will reinforce and extend classroom learning by giving students hands-on experiences that they cannot find in the classroom alone.” —Heather Coffman

Lessons came to life for middle school students from Lick Creek Community Consolidated School District #16 on May 20, as they got a first-hand taste of the sights and sounds of the Cache River Wetlands. The Buncombe-based school was the first to receive funding from **Kids to the Cache**, a new program sponsored by Friends of the Cache to help area schools cover the transportation costs of Cache-oriented field trips.

The Lick Creek students arrived well-prepared by their science teacher, Heather Coffman, who prefaced the field trip with a classroom session entitled “Discovering Wetlands.” Other related lessons included investigating wetland soil, comparing wetland water to other water sources, and learning about wetland food webs and landscapes. Coffman says her goal is to educate students about the biodiversity of their environment and provide them with the opportunity to experience that diversity first-hand. “A trip to the

Members of an environment class from Anna-Jonesboro High School celebrated Earth Day on April 17 by planting 1,000 prairie forbs at the Cache River Wetlands Center. The hard-working students added plants to a hill prairie and extended three wetland prairie areas as part of the 2015 **Earth Day in the Parks** program. Past participants, which include Metropolis, Franklin and Century grade schools and Sandoval and Dongola high schools, have also constructed nesting boxes and removed invasive exotic plants.

Earth Day in the Parks aims to promote natural resource stewardship by students, who perform a variety of volunteer projects in Illinois state parks, and are then encouraged to come back and see the results of their work. Some classes go on to perform additional volunteer work at their designated parks. The program, which received a grant from the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund this year, is sponsored by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. On your next visit to the Wetlands Center, be sure to stroll through the ever-changing and developing prairies and admire the students’ handiwork!

Cache River Watershed will reinforce and extend classroom learning by giving students hands-on experiences that they cannot find in the classroom alone,” she explains. “Such experiences are what pique students’ interest and provide them with vivid memories of a fantastic learning process.”

Kids to the Cache expects to offer multiple grants for Fall 2015, with applications due **August 1**. For more information and application materials, contact Jodie Delaney at jodied87@gmail.com.

Create your own “mini wetland”



photo: Paula Gray Havlik

Consider creating your own “mini wetland” by planting a rain garden.

This beautiful landscape feature provides habitat for hummingbirds and butterflies, and also helps filter storm run-off and reduce flooding.

To get started, observe your property during and after a rainfall to find an existing low spot where water collects, but also drains within a day or two. Dig a shallow depression with gently sloped sides, ideally in a bean shape with the long side facing upslope to catch as much water as possible. Remove existing vegetation and plant the bed with native species, which have deep root systems that can stand up to excess moisture. Add 2-4 inches of mulch. Your rain garden will need regular watering and weeding during its first year. However, as the native plants mature, the need for watering and weeding will decrease.

Chris Benda, president of the Illinois Native Plant Society, suggests the following native plants as good rain garden options:

- Great Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)
- Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
- Rose Turtlehead (*Chelone obliqua*)
- Obedient Plant (*Physostegia virginiana*)
- Blue Flag Iris (*Iris schrevei*)
- Bur Marigold (*Bidens sp.*)

- Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
- Copper Iris (*Iris fulva*)
- Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis carolinensis*)
- Pickereelweed (*Pontederia cordata*)
- Aster (*Symphotrichum lanceolatus and nova-angeliae*)
- Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
- Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus lasiocarpus*)
- Muskum Sedge (*Carex muskingumensis*)
- Queen-of-the-Prairie (*Filiendula rubra*)
- Winged Monkeyflower (*Mimulus alatus*)
- Bur reed (*Sparganium sp.*)

For more information, check out the book, *Water Plants for Missouri Ponds* by James R. Whitley, Barbara Bassett, Joe Dillard, and Rebecca Haefner; or download the “Rain Gardens” brochure at www.prairierivers.org.



photo: Paula Gray Havlik

Building habitat for butterflies is a priority for Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge staff as they prepare to plant native flowers at two sites located on the Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve. Although the waterfowl reserve itself is normally closed to the public, one of the planting sites will be located near a public viewing area, the Bellrose Overlook off Cache Chapel Road. The native plantings will total two acres and support pollinators such as monarch butterflies, bees and other valuable insects.

Become a Friend

- \$15 Individual
- \$25 Family
- New Member
- \$50 Contributing
- \$100 Supporting
- Current Member
- \$250 Sustaining
- \$1,000 Lifetime

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

To remain budget and environment-friendly, all communications are sent via e-mail.

Please let us know if you need to receive information via U.S. mail.

All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to Friends of the Cache River Watershed and mail to: 8885 State Rt. 37 South, Cypress, IL 62923.